UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
36th meeting
held on
Friday, 19 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/191 ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/48/SR.36
12 January 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

93-82540 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (A/48/25, A/48/451 and Corr.1, A/48/272-S/26108, A/48/552; A/C.2/48/2, A/C.2/48/6)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/48/216-E/1993/92, A/48/552; A/C.2/48/6)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/48/8 and Add.1, A/48/37)

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (A/48/182, A/48/291-S/26242, A/48/294-S/26247, A/48/309, A/48/338, A/48/359, A/48/401, A/48/427, A/48/484-S/26552, A/48/485, A/48/552, A/48/563; A/C.2/48/4, A/C.2/48/6)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/191 ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (A/48/442)

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (A/48/36, A/48/564)

(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (A/48/479)

1. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that a great deal was expected of the follow-up activity to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, much of which was to be carried out at the national level. It was even hoped that international cooperation for development would be revitalized as a result. Many countries had already prepared national sustainable development strategies and national versions of Agenda 21 or had instituted systematic follow-up arrangements. At the international level, follow-up should take the form of financing, technology transfers, capacity-building, policy development and the pursuit of the negotiating agendas identified at the Rio de Janeiro Conference.

2. His Department was responsible for helping the Commission on Sustainable Development to review and evaluate all follow-up activities and for identifying areas where further assistance was needed. The first, very successful meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been attended by high-level representatives of more than 50 countries and 700 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Two working groups had been established - one on finance, the other on technology - and would begin their work in early 1994.

3. The Commission had certain expectations of Member States. First, it expected them to report on their own efforts to implement Agenda 21, which had

been designed largely for implementation at the national level. Second, it expected Governments to integrate independent agents such as NGOs into the follow-up process. Third, Governments were expected to fulfil their commitments to take specific action and provide financial support and technology. Fourth, Governments were expected to ensure that the development orientation of Agenda 21 was consistently reflected in their positions in all intergovernmental bodies. Agenda 21 must be implemented not only by the Commission on Sustainable Development but also throughout the United Nations system.

4. In return, Member States had certain expectations of the Commission and his Department. They were expected to maintain the inter-agency collaboration and spirit of cooperation that had prevailed at the Earth Summit and had since been formalized in the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD). At the practical level, Task Managers had been appointed in different areas in an effort to distribute the work of coordination. As Member States also expected the Commission to provide substantive expert input into their national initiatives, the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development had been established.

5. The follow-up process was advancing at the intergovernmental level as well. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would take place in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994. Member States must recognize that the Conference was a crucial aspect of the follow-up to the Earth Summit and respond with high-level participation, contributions to the relevant voluntary and trust funds, promotional and information activities and support for NGO participation. The follow-up process in the area of desertification was also of great importance. The International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, was the first legal instrument to evolve from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and was expected to be completed by June 1994. While the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change had not held substantive discussions in 1993, the number of countries which had ratified the Framework Convention to date was encouraging. The Government of Germany had offered to host the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and there was a strong possibility that the Conference could be held in early 1995.

6. The following four substantive questions must be addressed in connection with the Conference of Parties: how a credible review of the implementation of the Conference could be undertaken in the absence of comparable climatic conditions; how the concept of joint implementation discussed in the International Negotiating Committee could be developed in a manner consistent with the responsibilities of developing and developed countries; whether or not the Convention would have to be supplemented to reflect new scientific assessments made by the International Panel on Climate Change; and how the Conference of Parties would fulfil its policy guidance functions with respect to the financing mechanism of the Convention. It might be useful to begin the debate on those questions prior to the convening of the Conference.

7. Ms. DOWDESWELL (Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) said that the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly Agenda 21, had marked a new beginning for UNEP. The Conference had reaffirmed the mandate of the UNEP Governing Council and the role of UNEP as the principal body within the United Nations system in the field of environment, taking into account the development aspects.

8. The seventeenth session of the UNEP Governing Council, held in May 1993, had focused almost exclusively on providing a meaningful and comprehensive response to Agenda 21 in the Programme's ongoing activities and its activities for 1994-1995. Acknowledging that its work must integrate environmental and developmental objectives, UNEP had decided to focus its efforts in three areas: the development of sound science, the encouragement of social concerns and the creation of effective public policy. The Governing Council had then noted that the proposed programme should be transitional in nature and incorporate the changes mandated by the Rio Conference. It had underscored the high priority to be accorded to activities which provided support to developing countries and had identified areas to be emphasized during 1994-1995. The Council had also supported the Earthwatch programme of environmental sensing, international environmental law, environmental economics, industry and energy.

9. The traditional catalytic role of UNEP acquired even greater importance in the light of the Programme's responsibilities under Chapter 38 of Agenda 21. In that connection, UNEP sought to develop a United Nations system-wide approach to environmental impact assessment and hoped to work with other United Nations bodies and the Bretton Woods institutions to promote the development of combined environmental and socio-economic analytical tools.

10. The Governing Council had decided to make the Earthwatch programme a more effective instrument for the environmental sensing of all elements influencing the global environment. UNEP was preparing a register of assessment-related environmental activities in the United Nations system which would feature a computerized catalogue of geographically-based environmental data. The Programme continued to contribute to the coordination and promotion of relevant scientific research with a view to providing a consolidated basis for decision-making.

11. UNEP had recognized the need to reorient many of its programmes. For example, future research in the desertification programme would focus on the social impact of desertification and on reporting successful examples of drylands protection. With other agencies, UNEP was developing a Global Climate Observing System and a global terrestrial observing system to help determine the impact of climate change on terrestrial ecosystems. The environmental information and data UNEP provided to Governments and organizations had to be adjusted to reflect the requirements of sustainable development. The Governing Council had approved a new approach to state-of-the-environment reports, which would take the form of regular scientific reports on specific sectors and topics.

12. The Governing Council had also reinforced its earlier decision to promote the transfer of environmentally sound technology through the UNEP cleaner

(Ms. Dowdeswell)

production programme. A demonstration project to improve cleaner production procedures was being designed, which included a feasibility study on international guidelines for information on potential environmental impacts to be supplied by exporters of technology. At a very practical level, the Programme would disseminate information on and explore modalities for the transfer of environmentally sound technology.

13. To promote sustainable development through international law, UNEP was encouraging the active implementation of international agreements for which it would bear responsibility. It planned to identify gaps in existing international environmental law and provide technical assistance to developing countries for the development of national environmental legislation and institutions. Education, information and training would remain a cornerstone of that UNEP programme.

14. Protection of freshwater resources had received the widest support during the deliberations of the Governing Council. The Programme's comprehensive approach to assessing and managing water resources would be strengthened by the Secretary-General's acceptance of the recommendation to designate UNEP as the focal point for water by merging all Secretariat freshwater activities under UNEP.

15. In response to Agenda 21, UNEP was contemplating strengthening the prior informed consent procedure contained in the amended London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade. Combining its keen interest in capacity-building and its experience in environmental law, UNEP had launched a major four-year project to strengthen national environmental legislation and institutional capacity in Africa. The project also involved the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Government of the Netherlands. UNEP continued to encourage the implementation of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Programme had also branched out into new areas such as poverty alleviation and trade and environment.

16. She was pleased to note that desertification had again become a major international concern, and she hoped that negotiations on an international convention to deal with that scourge, begun in Nairobi earlier in the year, would culminate in an international legal framework whose implementation modalities would be clearly defined and which would receive political and financial support. To that end, UNEP had provided its full support to the secretariat of the International Negotiating Committee. The Programme would also continue to compile, disseminate and promote the development of methodologies for the design and implementation of desertification control projects and to extend its support to the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO).

17. The Convention on Biological Diversity had been ratified by the required number of States and would enter into force in December 1993. A recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention had focused on ways and

(Ms. Dowdeswell)

means of implementing the provisions of that instrument at the national and international levels.

18. With regard to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP not only would provide scientific and technical advice but would act as the Facility's environmental trustee, safeguarding the interests of the relevant international conventions. The Programme would continue to cooperate closely with the Commission on Sustainable Development and its secretariat. The Commission had designated UNEP as Task Manager for toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes, environmental law, ozone and transboundary atmosphere pollution, desertification, biodiversity and Earthwatch.

19. As part of its restructuring efforts, UNEP had introduced a new management approach with a view to providing an integrated response to the needs of Member States in its programme planning for the 1994-1995 biennium. UNEP would also attempt to strengthen the operational capacity of its regional offices, as called for by Agenda 21 and the Governing Council, and enhance its cooperation with both the regional bureaux of UNDP and the regional commissions.

20. Unfortunately, contributions to the Environment Fund for 1992 and 1993 had been lower than expected, and UNEP's programme of activities had had to be scaled down. Clearly, the allocation of resources in the future must reflect the priority attached by Member States to the environment.

21. Turning to the work of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), she said that the principal message to emerge from the fourteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, held at Nairobi from 26 April to 5 May 1993, was that effective human settlements development and management were fundamental to the attainment of the overall goal of sustainable development. The Commission had recognized the intersectoral nature of human settlements and their linkages to such critical development issues as employment-generation, poverty alleviation, the advancement of women and the goals of Agenda 21.

22. The Commission had also underscored the contribution that human settlements development could make to political and social stability at a time of transition in many parts of the world. As the home was both the physical and psychological foundation of stable family and community life, the international community must recognize that the work of Habitat was crucial to the advancement of the goals of peace, development and progress. Moreover, human settlements programmes formed the core of rehabilitation and development efforts in areas shattered by armed conflict.

23. Human settlements policies and programmes were a fundamental element of sustainable development. Given that the overwhelming majority of the world's population in the twenty-first century would be living in towns and cities, funding must be provided to ensure the quality of infrastructure, services and urban management, the key determinants of economic growth and the quality of life. Coordinated human settlements and environmental policies were therefore vital in all countries at all levels.

24. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had pointed out that the immediate priority of developing countries was upgrading the

(Ms. Dowdeswell)

environment of their populations. The possibility of joint activities involving Habitat and UNEP had therefore been given much consideration at the Commission's fourteenth session and was reflected in the Commission's decisions and resolutions. One of the main topics of discussion had been the preparations for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Turkey in June 1996. The Commission's deliberations had confirmed that Governments were expecting the Conference to define inclusive, innovative and enabling settlements and urban policies for the twenty-first century which could generate economic growth, alleviate poverty and improve the urban environment. Those concerns were reflected in the two substantive themes recommended by the Commission for the Conference: sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world and adequate shelter for all. They were also reflected in the draft guidelines for preparations at the national, regional and global levels elaborated by the Commission at the request of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

25. Preparations for the Conference were well under way. A core secretariat and a work programme for the preparatory process had been submitted to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. The regional commissions had also been involved in the preparatory process, and the World Bank and Habitat had entered into an agreement to develop a set of urban indicators which Governments could use to monitor and assess human settlements conditions and needs and to establish urban data and information systems. The Commission for Human Settlements attached great importance to national preparations in particular, which it hoped would be broad-based and involve community groups, local authorities, NGOs, women's organizations and the private sector.

26. The Commission had also considered the ongoing implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. It had urged Governments to adopt an effective system for monitoring the implementation of their national strategies, using the shelter sector performance indicators developed by the Commission in collaboration with the World Bank.

27. The Commission had also adopted resolutions on the human right to adequate housing and on disaster and post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation. The Centre had begun to work closely with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and had been invited to join the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Development. Increasingly, it was being called upon to make an early contribution to the continuum of rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts of the United Nations system. Habitat continued to play a leading role in Afghanistan, Liberia, Rwanda, El Salvador and, in cooperation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in southern Lebanon. It had recently been asked by the regional authorities in northern Somalia to work with UNDP on a reconstruction and economic revitalization programme in Hargeisa.

28. Under common executive leadership, Habitat and UNEP had explored opportunities for collaboration in a broad range of areas. The two were carrying out joint programming exercises in all regions where developing countries were located. UNEP and Habitat had made a joint contribution to the World Conference on Human Rights and would continue to do so at a number of other major United Nations development-oriented conferences. Cooperation

(Ms. Dowdeswell)

between UNEP and Habitat would require the support of each Member State. It should be noted in that connection that funding for Habitat's development cooperation activities, after experiencing threefold growth over the preceding five years, might be dramatically reduced in the medium and long terms.

29. She concluded by paying a tribute to Mr. Michael Reitzel-Neilsen, a senior staff member of UNEP and Habitat who had been senselessly murdered.

30. Mr. LEVY (Director, Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing and its impact on the living marine resources of the world's oceans and seas (A/48/451), said that progress had been achieved in regulating that type of fishing. In paragraph 18 of his report, the Secretary-General endorsed the conclusion of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that there had been a significant decline in the use of large-scale pelagic drift-nets in the world except in the Mediterranean Sea. That was a matter of great concern, given the fragility of some of the fish stocks in that region. However, the distinct improvement in the overall situation and the fact that the majority of States had taken measures to limit drift-net fishing were to be welcomed.

31. The report of the Secretary-General dealing with the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (A/48/479) had been submitted in accordance with paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 47/192, which had expressed the mounting concern of the international community with the state of high seas fisheries. That concern had first been expressed at the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and negotiations on the matter had continued at the Conference. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 had called for an intergovernmental conference under United Nations auspices, taking into account relevant activities at the subregional, regional and global levels, with a view to promoting effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. The Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had held an organizational session and a substantive session at Headquarters. The discussion during the general debate at the substantive session had resulted in a basic text, contained in annex II of the Secretary-General's report, that would serve as a basis for subsequent negotiations. It should be noted that the voluntary fund established to facilitate participation in the Conference by representatives of least developed countries had not yet received any contributions, despite appeals, to that end, and hoped that that situation would soon be remedied.

32. Mr. KJELLÉN (Sweden), speaking as Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification on those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, introduced the Committee's report (A/48/226 and Add.1). At the Committee's first substantive session, held in Nairobi, some of the presentations, while noting the global dimension of the problem, had underlined the particular vulnerability of African countries and the need for international support to their Governments, which were struggling to cope with the problem with limited means. Governments had expressed their

(Mr. Kjellén, Sweden)

readiness to support the general structure of the convention, which was similar to that of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The basic text had undergone a first reading during the second session, held at Geneva, and the Secretariat was currently preparing a consolidated document based on positions expressed at that session which would be discussed at the third session, in January 1994. The Secretariat had also launched a series of case-studies on selected regions and countries of Africa to be used in identifying measures and eliciting long-term commitments by donors and affected Governments.

33. In its decision 2/4, the International Negotiating Committee had proposed a draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly at its current session. The text included an appeal for the Committee to conclude its negotiations before the June 1994 deadline established by Agenda 21. While that time-frame was inadequate for solving all the problems involved in preparing the convention, efforts should be made to ensure that the instrument provided a strong legal basis for supporting and monitoring the implementation of specific agreements on the subject within a coherent institutional structure.

34. Although previous efforts to combat desertification had been unsuccessful, the international community must have confidence in the follow-up to the Rio Conference and concerted international efforts to achieve sustainable development. In the context of Agenda 21, desertification problems could be placed in the broad setting of land management, which was linked to the all-pervading problem of water and to energy policy, but also to an understanding of the socio-economic factors involved. The convention must therefore be a practical instrument.

35. The global dimension of the problems related to desertification and drought, particularly those relating to food security, was obvious. Africa, however, was particularly vulnerable, and the international community had a common responsibility to improve its development prospects. Technical issues must be addressed in the negotiations, but the political dimension must not be overlooked. Only if the convention led to lasting improvements in living conditions could it be considered a success.

36. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the adoption of Agenda 21 had been a clear manifestation of political will to address the challenges of environment and development. However, the developing countries were prepared to achieve the objectives of environmental protection only if resolute and effective policies to solve the problems of poverty and external debt and remove other external impediments to their economic revitalization were implemented.

37. The success of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was only a first step, and the prompt launching of the intersessional working groups was essential if their recommendations were to be ready for consideration at the Commission's second session. The review of financial requirements, a policy framework for their effective mobilization and action to remove barriers to technology transfers were crucial to the implementation of the Commission's multi-year programme of work.

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

38. Within the framework of the implementation of Agenda 21, the Group of 77 and China had participated actively in the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility. They also wished to see the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development widely promoted, thereby raising public awareness of the need for a balanced approach to environment and development issues. Finally, they wished to highlight the importance of full implementation of the relating to hazardous wastes originating in industrialized countries and sent to developing countries.

39. The Group of 77 and China were confident that an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, would be adopted before June 1994. They hoped that the draft resolution adopted by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would be approved by the General Assembly in order to give political impetus to the negotiating process and the framework for its final phase.

40. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Barbados in 1994, represented another initial step in the implementation of Agenda 21. Adequate promotion of the Conference by the Department of Public Information and contributions to the voluntary fund established to support the participation of small island States and least developed countries would contribute to its success.

41. The Group of 77 reaffirmed its full support for the objectives of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), scheduled for 1996, as a means of promoting action to alleviate the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups in developing countries. The Group wished to reiterate its concern that the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements had not yet been appointed. The Centre was responsible for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and the preparation of Habitat II and should therefore be maintained as an independent and separate unit. The situation of human settlements in both urban and rural areas demanded increasing attention as an integral part of the eradication of poverty in developing countries.

42. Mr. VAN DE CRAEN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that, with regard to the follow-up of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the European Union had taken note of the proposal to hold meetings of two working groups. The mandate of the working groups should not be too rigid, nor should the groups themselves be considered as subsidiary bodies of the Commission, since their work was by no means exclusive. Other meetings, including those held on an ad hoc basis, also had an important role to play in preparing for the sessions of the Commission. The agendas of the working groups should reflect their technical nature and should be adopted by consensus. The European Union was prepared to consider practical administrative and budgetary arrangements that would be in keeping with its concept of the role of the working groups.

43. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries

(Mr. van de Craen, Belgium)

Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, had been given a very clear mandate which it should respect. The European Union hoped that by June 1994, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would complete its work on the convention, whose geographical sphere of application would be universal, with particular emphasis on Africa.

44. The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had made considerable progress in the preparation of the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States, to be adopted by the Conference. The chapters of the draft programme of action dealing with the financial and institutional aspects should be drafted in a balanced manner, while the programme of action as a whole should place greater emphasis on such cross-sectoral issues as the development of national capacities and institutions and regional cooperation. The next session of the Preparatory Committee should be devoted exclusively to negotiations. If the Preparatory Committee should also prepare a draft of the Barbados Declaration, which the members of the Committee could consider at its next session.

45. The first session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had brought to light areas of possible compromise on specific protection measures that could be adopted. The Conference should reach a consensus on basic principles for the elaboration of such measures. The Conference should also consider specific fish stocks wherever they were found, both within and beyond the exclusive economic zones, since its success would depend largely on its responses to that question. Furthermore, the Conference should be given an opportunity to continue and complete its work before the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

46. With regard to the follow-up of all questions relating to environment and development, the European Union considered that all those related issues should be grouped under a single agenda item to be considered as a whole by the Second Committee. That would prevent the consideration of individual aspects of the follow-up out of context and would enable the Committee to make a better assessment of the progress that had been accomplished.

47. While the European Union was in favour of a fully operational United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, it could not support certain plans to strengthen the Centre's institutional capacities both at the Headquarters and national or regional levels, since there was no convincing need for such an exercise. The European Union supported the Secretary-General's decision to keep UNEP and UNCHS under the same executive head, but considered that their programmes and activities should continue to be managed separately.

48. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had constituted a landmark in the strengthening of multilateralism and that the consolidation of its results was the task of the Commission on Sustainable Development. To ensure the success of its work, the Commission must maintain the democratic, consensual atmosphere of that Conference in the implementation of Agenda 21 programmes.

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

49. The fulfilment of the financial commitments assumed at the Earth Summit and the procurement of adequate new funds were indispensable for the achievement of sustainable development objectives. In addition, attention must be paid to projects presented by developing countries and to their assistance requirements. A precise definition of objectives might provide the necessary stimulus for the financing of such projects.

50. Strict compliance with the multi-year work schedule adopted by consensus at the Commission's first session was a prerequisite for activities undertaken in the context of Agenda 21. Informal meetings on specific topics might be useful, while the Commission and its working groups afforded a framework for elaborating recommendations and taking decisions involving the participation of all the Member States.

51. The principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development must be disseminated among the agencies of the United Nations system and in both the public and private sectors of the Member States to ensure that the "Spirit of Rio" was kept alive.

52. The Rio Group fully supported the holding of the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Conference would have to approve those States' plans and programme on sustainable development, marine resources, biodiversity and improved quality of life and take steps to enable them to deal effectively with environmental changes. The Group also recognized the importance, especially for Africa, but also for their own region, of the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification. If practical results were to be achieved in those areas, appropriate financing mechanisms must be negotiated and defined.

53. The definition of the terms of reference of the restructured Global Environment Facility was a sign of the progress made in that area, although much work remained to be done. The countries of the Rio Group wished to note their strong interest in the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and reaffirmed their intention to participate actively in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

54. Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that the resumed session of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States should continue exactly where it had left off in the negotiations; there was no need for a general debate or formal statements. The resumed session should resolve as many of the outstanding issues as possible before the Conference was held, and the Preparatory Committee should begin work on the Barbados Declaration so that Conference participants would have a clear idea of the issues that remained to be discussed. It would also be useful to hold informal meetings and consultations with all interested parties before the next session of the Preparatory Committee.

55. Two weeks earlier, his delegation had participated in the World Coast Conference, which had been held in the Netherlands, and it hoped that the

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Preparatory Committee would be able to benefit from the results of that important meeting.

56. Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria) said that the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had laid solid foundations that should enable the Commission to discharge its broad mandate successfully. The Commission's decision to create ad hoc working groups on finance and technology questions would require budgetary support. Great care should be taken to ensure that the working groups made a valuable contribution to the deliberations and recommendations of the Commission.

57. From 14 to 16 April 1994, Austria would hold a symposium on the topic "Sustainable development and international law" at which experts from North and South, the academic world, Governments and non-governmental organizations would discuss the possible contributions of international law to the quest for sustainable development for all. His delegation would see to it that the conclusions and recommendations of the symposium were made available to Member States prior to the Commission's next session.

58. The eighth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change had laid a foundation for further constructive work. The outcome of the Global Environment Facility's replenishment and restructuring would play an essential role in that regard. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session concerned the acceptance of Germany's invitation to host the first session of the Conference of the Parties in Berlin from 28 March to 7 April 1995. Since the Convention on Climate Change was expected to enter into force in early 1994, it was essential to make as much progress as possible in such areas as the adequacy of commitments, the elaboration of criteria for joint implementation, the fine-tuning of issues relating to the financial mechanism and the role of subsidiary bodies.

59. The negotiations undertaken by the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States on chapters I to XIV of the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States had been particularly productive. However, further work was needed on chapter XV, and work on the Barbados Declaration had yet to begin. His delegation therefore supported the proposal to convene a short resumed session of the Preparatory Committee early in 1994 at which the draft programme of action could be finalized.

60. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification had made substantial progress in the two sessions it had held so far. His delegation would do its part to ensure that a convention was adopted by June 1994 and fully supported the recommendation to hold a further session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee not later than 31 January 1995 to review the situation in the interim period pending the Convention's entry into force.

61. The international community was faced with the challenge of finding a paradigm for development in which economic growth, ecological sustainability and equity within and between countries were balanced. That challenge should be

(Mr. Sucharipa, Austria)

brought into the mainstream of scientific research and political discourse, and the United Nations should become a forum in which ways and means of promoting the new development paradigm could be discussed. The Organization should also provide expert advice on crucial policy choices, including energy issues, that lay at the very heart of the development process.

62. Mr. KEATING (New Zealand) said that while a real effort had been made by the international community to advance the environment agenda over the past year, it was important to remain vigilant in areas where gains had already been achieved, such as large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing and its impact on marine resources. General Assembly resolution 46/215, which had been reaffirmed at the Rio Conference, was a landmark decision that called for a global moratorium on drift-net fishing. His delegation reaffirmed its strong support for that resolution and wished to see it fully implemented.

63. Large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing had ceased on the high seas of the South Pacific, and support was growing for the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drift-nets in the South Pacific. His delegation welcomed Fiji's signature of the Convention and Chile's ratification of Protocol II, as well as the measures taken by a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region, to comply with the moratorium.

64. He expressed concern about reports of unacceptable dragnet fishing in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic and the flagging out of vessels to circumvent national regulations. His delegation called upon the States concerned to take urgent steps to implement the moratorium and comply with national and regional regulations fully.

65. It was essential that the General Assembly should reaffirm the importance of full compliance with resolution 46/215 at its current session. His delegation would welcome further annual reports by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the moratorium and urged States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide the Secretary-General with all relevant information, especially on any alleged violations.

66. In the difficult task of orchestrating environmental activities in the wake of the Rio Conference, it was clear that the United Nations must play a central role. Various organizations throughout the United Nations system had sought to take the implementation of Agenda 21 into account, and the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been a major step. The Commission's challenging dual role would involve striking a balance between focusing political attention on environment and development issues and the practical task of implementing Agenda 21. The Commission must not become bogged down in bureaucracy; to that end, the current guidelines for national reporting should be simplified at the Commission's 1994 session.

67. His delegation attached great importance to the achievement of meaningful results from the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification, but felt that a detailed review of their substantive aspects could wait until the final reports

(Mr. Keating, New Zealand)

thereon were considered at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Further meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States should be held to complete work on the proposed programme of action for those States.

68. New Zealand accorded priority to work on the biodiversity and climate change conventions and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility, and had therefore ratified the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Copenhagen Amendment, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in addition to agreeing to contribute to the operational phase of GEF. He encouraged States that had not yet become parties to the conventions to do so promptly.

69. Despite the scarcity of resources and the need for economies, short-term considerations should not be allowed to delay the work on global environment and development issues or hamper the achievement of the necessary consensus.

70. Mr. KOKEEV (Russian Federation) said that the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had confirmed the usefulness of that new body. The Commission should not only become a political forum for strengthening North-South and East-West partnership but should also elaborate specific recommendations for countries and international organizations based on an analysis of the main trends and problems and experience acquired in the field of sustainable development, as well as on a dialogue with all partners, including non-governmental organizations.

71. The implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had been accompanied by an improvement in the structures for coordinating all elements of the United Nations system in that field. His delegation welcomed the first steps of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and was convinced that the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development would also play a positive role.

72. In spite of its current difficulties, the Russian Federation was endeavouring to make its contribution to sustainable development at the international and national levels. It had established an interdepartmental commission to implement the decisions of the Conference and had begun preparations for its ratification of the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. An annual report on the state of the environment in the Russian Federation presented an objective picture of the current situation there and indicated that, in addition to its own resources, the Russian Federation would have to rely on the international community's support and understanding of its specific capabilities, needs and interests.

73. The countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States had proposed that, at the current session of the General Assembly, an exchange of views should be held on ways and means of strengthening ecological monitoring from outer space as an important means of implementing the decisions of the Rio Conference. All delegations should take part in a dialogue and put forward constructive ideas on the development of an early warning system for environmental disasters. In the interest of ecological monitoring from outer

(Mr. Kokeev, Russian Federation)

space, it was important to make maximum use of the Organization's existing experience, in particular the experience of UNEP and that gained in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space, as well as the potential of such mechanisms as the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance.

74. The creation of a system of ecological monitoring from outer space would substantially increase opportunities for solving a number of cardinal issues raised by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, such as the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the future international convention to combat desertification, as well as the sustainable development of small island developing States, the preservation of living marine resource and cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.

75. Ms. ULLOA (Ecuador), referring to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, said that her delegation considered it essential, at future sessions of the Conference, to abide by the agreements reached during the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to adhere strictly to the mandate given to the Conference, limiting the discussions to the high seas. The recommendations formulated by the Conference must have a binding character, clearly establishing the rights and obligations of States and creating suitable mechanisms for resolving disputes. The existence of a universal code of conduct in that area would also strengthen the action of regional and subregional bodies.

76. The success of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 must be evaluated in terms of improvements made at the national level by Governments and provincial and local authorities, and of the measures adopted by the international community and financial institutions to support the efforts of developing countries to provide housing for the poor. Given the beneficial effects that healthy, safe housing would have on the human environment, it was essential to cooperate fully in the preparatory work for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.